

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 275297

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, AR

SUBJECT: SALE OF COBRA HELICOPTER AND MINIGUNS

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 6842; (B) STATE 296280 (75)

(C) MILGP MSG BUENOS AIRES 261723Z AUG. 75.

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM VEST

1. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO APPROVE SALE OF COBRA HELICOPTERS IF ARGENTINA REQUESTS THEM. PARA 3 REF B STATED THAT REGIONAL POLICY BARRED SALE TO LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES OF ASSAULT AND ATTACK HELICOPTERS OF COBRA MODEL (AH-1G/J). OUR REVIEW OF THIS POLICY AFTER WE RECEIVED REF A HAS NOT TURNED UP ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN LATIN AMERICA WHICH WOULD WARRANT APPROVAL OF COBRA OR SIMILAR
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HELICOPTER SALES ANYWHERE IN THE REGION.

2. OUR REVIEW OF AUGUST 26, 1975 REQUEST BY MILGP BUENOS AIRES (REF C) FOR CHANGE IN POLICY RE COBRA AND MINIGUN HAS CONVINCED US THAT STATED PURPOSE OF COBRA PURCHASE, VIZ. TO ASSIST IN WAR AGAINST GUERRILLAS IN TUCUMAN, COULD BE AS EFFECTIVELY ACHIEVED WITH EQUIPMENT GOA ALREADY HAD IN QUANTITY, UH-1H HELICOPTER. WE STILL BELIEVE UH-1H HELICOPTER CAN BE USED AS POTENT COUNTER-GUERRILLA WEAPON WHICH, UNLIKE COBRA, IS ALSO SUITABLE FOR WIDE VARIETY OF OTHER MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY USES. ADDITION OF SINGLE-PURPOSE COBRAS WOULD NOT RAISE ANTI-GUERRILLA CAPABILITIES UNDER ARGENTINE CONDITIONS SIGNIFICANTLY, BUT WOULD CREATE PRECEDENT FOR OTHER COUNTRIES IN AREA AND LIKELY RESULT IN REQUESTS FOR PURCHASE OF ATTACK HELICOPTERS. WE DO NOT WISH TO ENCOURAGE SUCH REQUESTS. WITH REGARD TO SALE OF MINIGUN, USG POLICY IS THAT THEY ARE NOT RELEASABLE TO LATIN AMERICAN REGION AT THIS TIME.

3. RE PARA 3 REF A, WE RECOGNIZE THAT ARGENTINIANS MAY SEEK TO PURCHASE ATTACK HELICOPTERS FROM OTHER SOURCES. SHOULD GOA SEEK TO PURCHASE ATTACK HELICOPTER FROM US LICENSEE IN ITALY, HOWEVER, SALE WOULD REQUIRE PRIOR USG APPROVAL WHICH WE WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE AT THIS TIME. KISSINGER

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